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# *Outdoor*

## RECREATION POTENTIAL

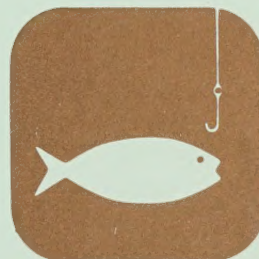
# *Colorado*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
DENVER, COLORADO

JUNE 1973

USDA-SCS-PORTLAND, OREG. 1973







## FOREWORD

This report on the potential for further outdoor recreation development in Colorado is the sum of the efforts of several hundred individuals representing state, federal and local agencies, and private citizens.

These individuals worked in groups to appraise the potential of 12 broad recreation enterprises in 23 categories. The ratings represent group judgments based on elements or factors that influence recreation potential. These elements include climate, people, income, transportation systems, water, soil, and vegetation.

The work of these appraisal groups, summarized in this publication, is recorded in 27 reports by counties or groups of counties covering the 63 counties in the State. Copies of these reports, which include five inventories pertinent to outdoor recreation, are available through local offices of the Soil Conservation Service.

*W. R. Rindick*  
State Conservationist

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OF  
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# Colorado . . .

## America's

## Outdoor

## Playground

The initial trend towards outdoor recreation everywhere is on the upswing. When it will peak, who can guess?

Outdoor recreation gains in Colorado were tremendous in the 1960's. They are expected to be even greater in the 1970's. The 1970 Colorado Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan estimates that resident and non-resident recreationists required 343 million activity days in 1970 and will require 646 million activity days in 1980.

Outdoor recreation facilities provided by public agencies, state, federal, and local are even now heavily burdened with recreation demands. Little relief is in sight.

More and more public agencies, who once guarded what they looked upon as their sole prerogative in providing for America's outdoor recreation needs, are convinced the private sector must share the responsibility.

Planning to prevent disorder and needless waste of natural resources and to provide for the recreation needs of Colorado must be bold and realistic. After planning, there must be implementation. No recreation seeker will be satisfied with estimates, projections, and paper plans.

STATE OF COLORADO PHOTO





To help in planning for and providing more outdoor recreation enterprises, the National Association of Conservation Districts suggested that their state associations and local districts inventory the present outdoor recreation facilities and the future potential. The Soil Conservation Service which gives technical assistance to 3,000 soil conservation districts was asked to help.

The first step was the preparation of a how-to-do it publication called a Guide to Making Appraisals of Potentials for Outdoor Recreation Developments.

This guide outlined the process for rating the potential for the 12 broad kinds of outdoor recreation enterprises. Ratings were based on the quality or quantity of various elements affecting the development potential of outdoor recreation enterprises.

Elements considered included climate, scenery, natural areas, scenic areas, historic areas, soils, existing recreational water and potential impoundment sites, wildlife, human population, age, distribution and income, access by local roads or tourist routes, and land ownership and use.

Scoring was determined by adding the numerical ratings for the elements considered. These scores were then translated into narrative ratings: high, medium, or low. In some appraisal areas, where certain key elements were so low or lacking as to be considered limiting factors, the potential for some kinds of recreation enterprises was not rated.

Five inventories were also made and are included in the individual appraisal area reports. These inventories, important because they list extent and numbers of natural resources, historic sites, and developed outdoor recreation areas, include: (1) natural, scenic and historic areas; (2) lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and streams; (3) impoundment sites; (4) existing outdoor private recreation enterprises; and (5) public outdoor recreation areas.

We are indebted to the Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Colorado Division of Wildlife for use of materials liberally offered from their 1970 Colorado Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Our thanks also to Don Tetsell, of Montrose, Colorado, for his ingenuity and skill in providing the cartoons to illustrate recreation enterprises.

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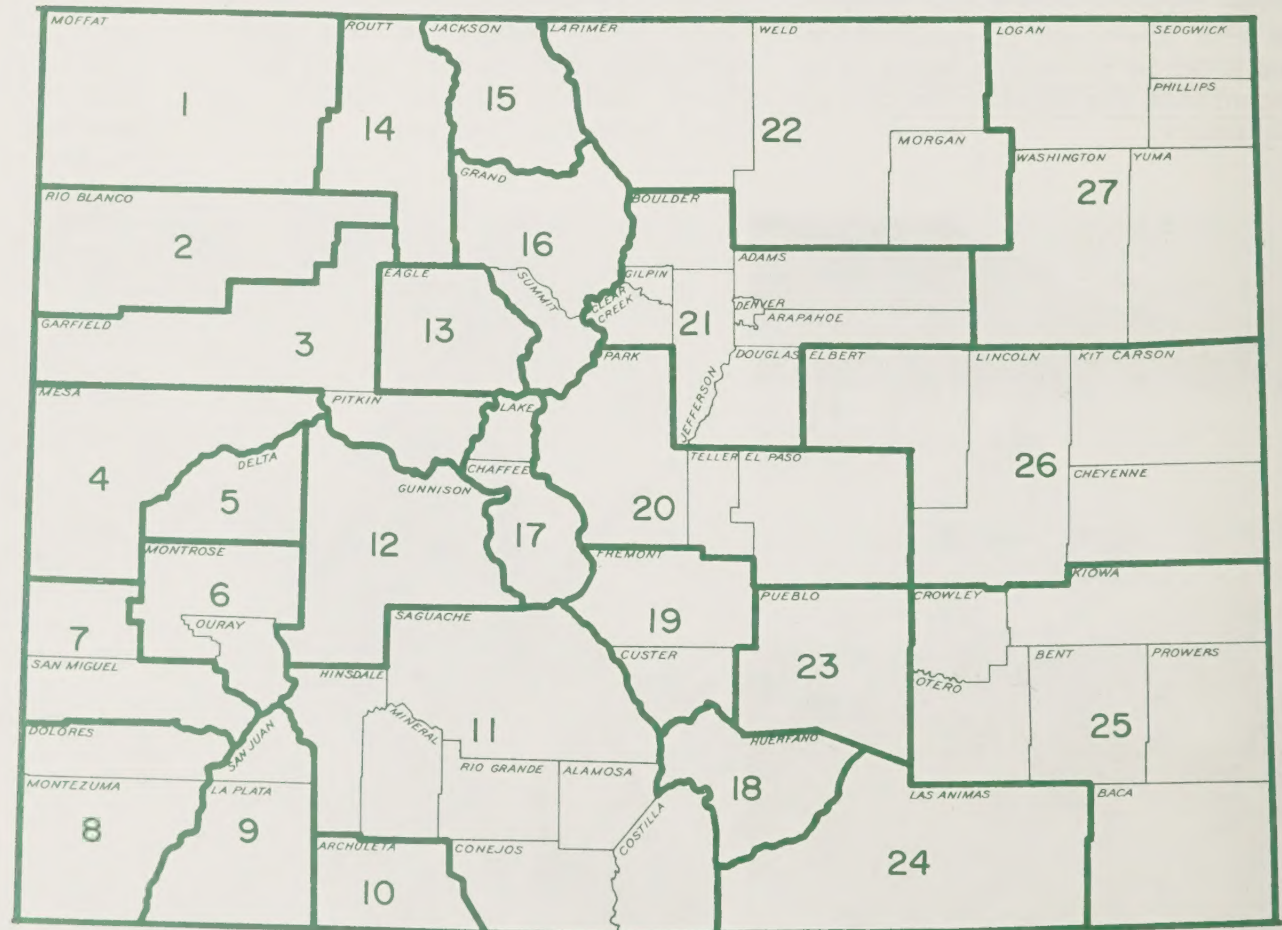






# Where roads to outdoor playgrounds say “follow me”

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# SUMMARY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION POTENTIAL, BY APPRAISAL AREAS

APPRAISAL AREA <sup>1/</sup>, AND RATING <sup>2/</sup>

Type of Enterprise	<div> <div>Moffat</div> <div>Rio Blanco</div> <div>Garfield &amp; Pitkin</div> <div>Mesa</div> <div>Delta</div> <div>E. Montrose &amp; Ouray</div> <div>Dolores &amp; Montezuma</div> <div>La Plata &amp; San Juan</div> <div>Archuleta</div> <div>San Luis Valley</div> <div>Gunnison</div> <div>Eagle</div> <div>Routt</div> <div>Jackson</div> <div>Grand &amp; Summit</div> <div>Chaffee &amp; Lake</div> <div>Huerfano</div> <div>Custer &amp; Fremont</div> <div>Pikes Peak</div> <div>Denver Metro</div> <div>Larimer-Morgan-Weld</div> <div>Pueblo</div> <div>Las Animas</div> <div>Lower Arkansas Area</div> <div>E. Central Colorado</div> <div>N.E. Colorado</div> </div>																										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Vacation Cabins, Cottages & Homesites	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M
Camping																											
Vacation Site	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M
Pack Trip	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Transient	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	H	M	M	M	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Picnic & Field Sports																											
Game, Play & Target Areas	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	-	M	M	M	L	L	M	-	H	M	M	M	H	H	H	H	M	M	M	M
Bicycling	M	-	M	M	M	-	-	-	-	L	M	-	L	M	-	M	M	-	M	H	H	H	H	-	M	M	L
Picnicking	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	M	M	M	M	L	M	M	H	M	M	M	H	H	H	H	M	M	M	M
Fishing Waters																											
Warm Water Fishing	M	L	-	M	M	M	-	M	L	L	-	-	-	-	-	-	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M	M
Cold Water Fishing	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M	M	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	M	M	-	L	L
Golf Courses																											
Standard & Par-3	M	M	M	M	M	M	L	-	M	L	L	-	L	M	M	H	M	M	M	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	M
Miniature & Driving Range	M	L	M	M	M	L	L	-	M	L	L	-	L	L	L	H	L	M	M	H	H	H	M	M	L	M	L
Hunting Areas																											
Small Game	M	H	M	M	H	H	M	L	M	M	H	M	M	H	H	M	M	H	H	M	M	H	H	M	H	H	H
Big Game	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M
Waterfowl	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	H	L	M	M	H	M	L	-	-	M	M	H	M	M	H	M	M
Natural, Scenic & Historic Areas																											
Natural Areas	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M
Scenic Areas	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M
Historic Areas	M	M	M	M	L	M	H	H	M	H	H	M	M	M	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M
Riding Stables	M	M	M	L	M	M	M	M	L	M	-	M	M	M	H	H	L	M	M	H	H	H	M	M	-	M	L
Shooting Preserves	L	-	M	M	M	M	-	L	L	L	-	-	-	-	-	H	-	M	-	-	H	H	M	-	-	M	M
Vacation Farms & Ranches																											
Vacation Farms	-	H	H	L	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	H	-	-	H	H	-	-	M	H	H	-	M	H	M
Vacation Ranches	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M
Water Sports	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	L	L	L	M	M	M	M	H	M	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	L	M
Winter Sports	M	H	H	H	M	H	H	M	H	M	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M	M	-	-	-	L	L

<sup>1/</sup> Appraisal Area - The county or group of counties considered by the appraisal group.

<sup>2/</sup> Rating - H = High M = Medium L = Low - = Not Rated



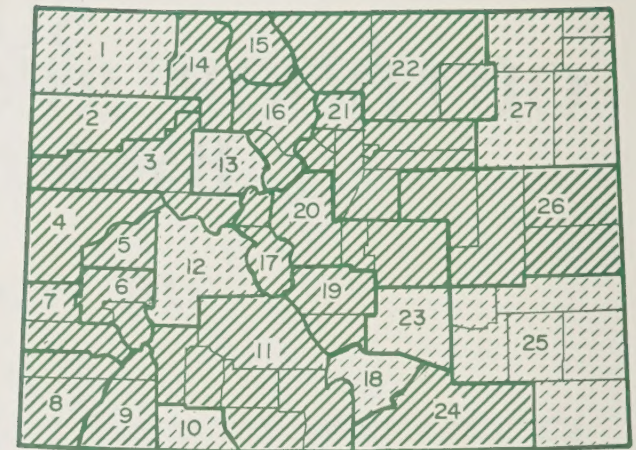
# APPRAISALS FOR MAJOR OUTDOOR RECREATION ENTERPRISES

## Vacation Cabins, Cottages and Homesites

Vacation cabins, cottages, and homesites often are associated with nearby recreational activities. Included are living quarters built for rental, sale, or use by organized group camps that require permanent buildings. This type of development is usually provided by the private sector.

Group or cluster developments, including individual cabin sites and the increasingly popular condominiums, offer opportunities to preserve open space and to substantially reduce environmental blight caused by access roads, electrical systems, and waste disposal systems.

Climate and scenery in Colorado are typically rated high. Both are key values to be con-



sidered. Care in selection of sites for cabins, cottages, and homesites is necessary to preclude development on areas where soil conditions combine to prevent inclusion of safe portable water supplies; nonerosive roads; buried utility lines; safe and satisfactory sewage disposal systems; and preservation of desirable vegetation including trees, grass and shrubs.

Important key elements in successful development include climate, scenery, suitable soils, and access roads. It is also desirable to be where off-site recreational activities are readily available.





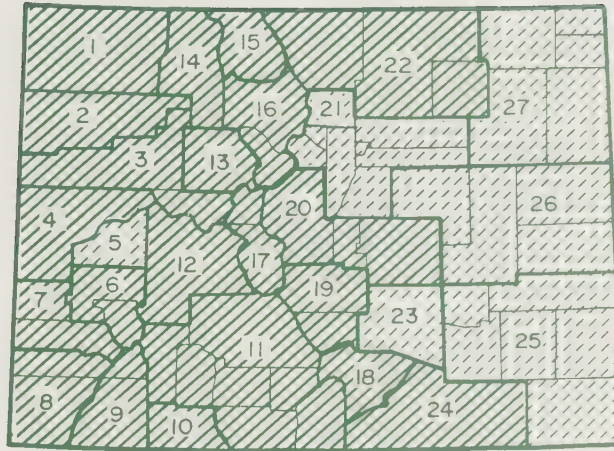




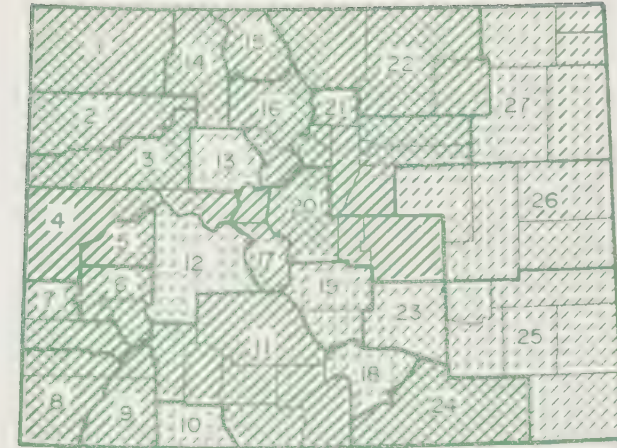


# Camping Grounds

*Pack trip*



*Vacation site*



Camping as a recreation enterprise falls into three distinct categories:

*Vacation Site* - Usually a destination-type camping area where the camper may stay several days while enjoying recreational activities either at the site or on adjoining areas. Natural resource requirements are high.

*Pack Trip* - In Colorado, this usually involves a camping experience involving travel on foot or by horseback. A head-quarters is often involved as is the use of public lands, natural or wilderness country.

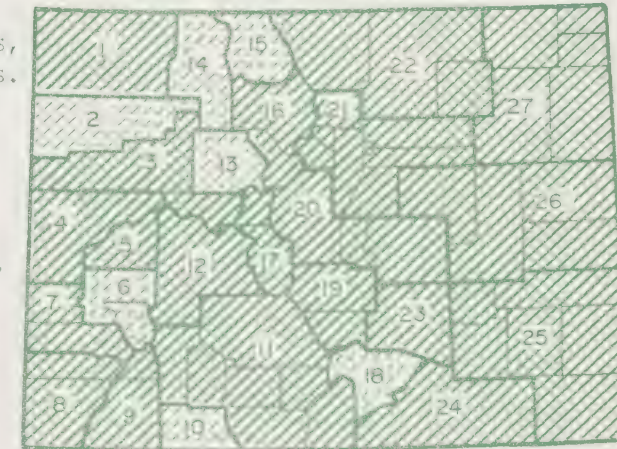
*Transient* - Here the camper plans to spend only a night. Resource requirements are not as high as for vacation and pack trip camping. Emphasis is on comfort and convenience

facilities such as showers, laundries, sewage, water and electrical hook-ups. These areas are usually near tourist routes.

Campground development, once largely the domain of the public sector, is becoming increasingly the responsibility of the private sector. Federal and state agencies are encouraging private development to relieve crowded conditions on public campgrounds.

Many areas in Colorado have high potential for camping. Some of the key elements are climate, scenery, natural areas, suitable soils, and tourist routes. Good management may be as important as selection of an attractive and developable site.

*Transient*







# Picnic and Field Sports

Considered under this type of recreation enterprise were three categories: game, play and target areas...bicycling... and picnicking. Not included in this type of enterprise are golf courses, water sports, and winter sports areas.

In most of Colorado, none of these three categories was rated high for various reasons. There is already an abundance of picnic areas. Resident populations were often too small to support development. Topography was not suited for the average bicyclist.

Appraisal groups rating these potentials in more urban areas, as compared to rural areas, generally rated these potentials higher due largely to greater numbers of people available to use the develop-

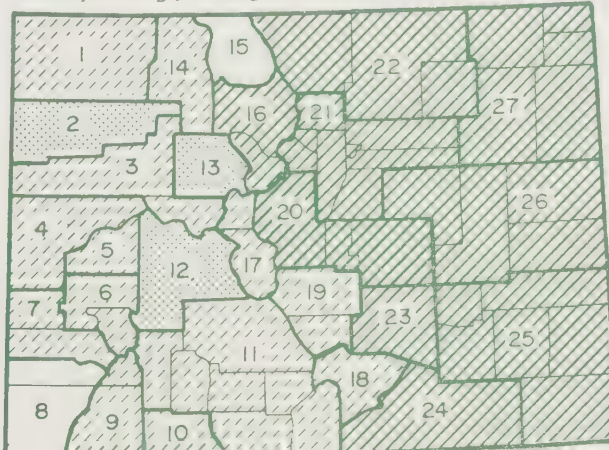
ments.

Special opportunities such as "chuckwagon feeds" and go-cart tracks were noted by various appraisal groups. These special developments may have a place in highly populated areas or those with a high summer population of vacationers.

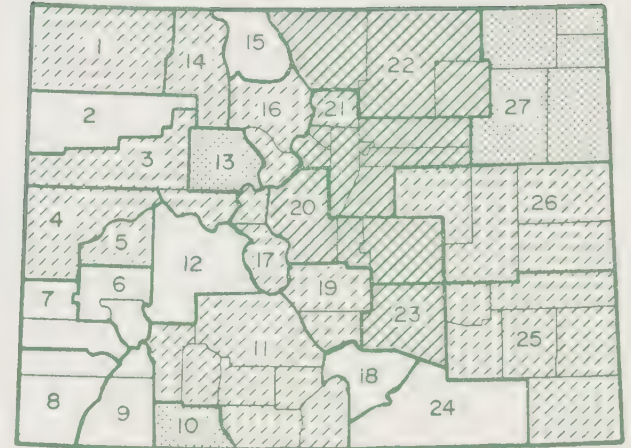
Population, proximity, and access were important considerations in the evaluations for these enterprises, with scenery and climate also affecting these developments considerably.

Soils may be a limiting factor for all three categories. Water, natural or developed, is an important but not essential value in picnic area developments.

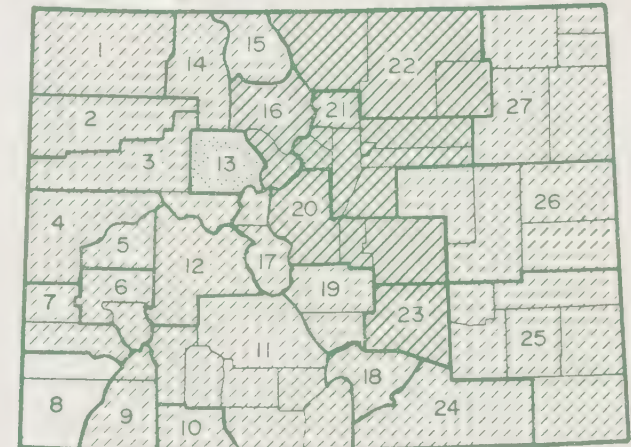
*Game, Play, Target Area*



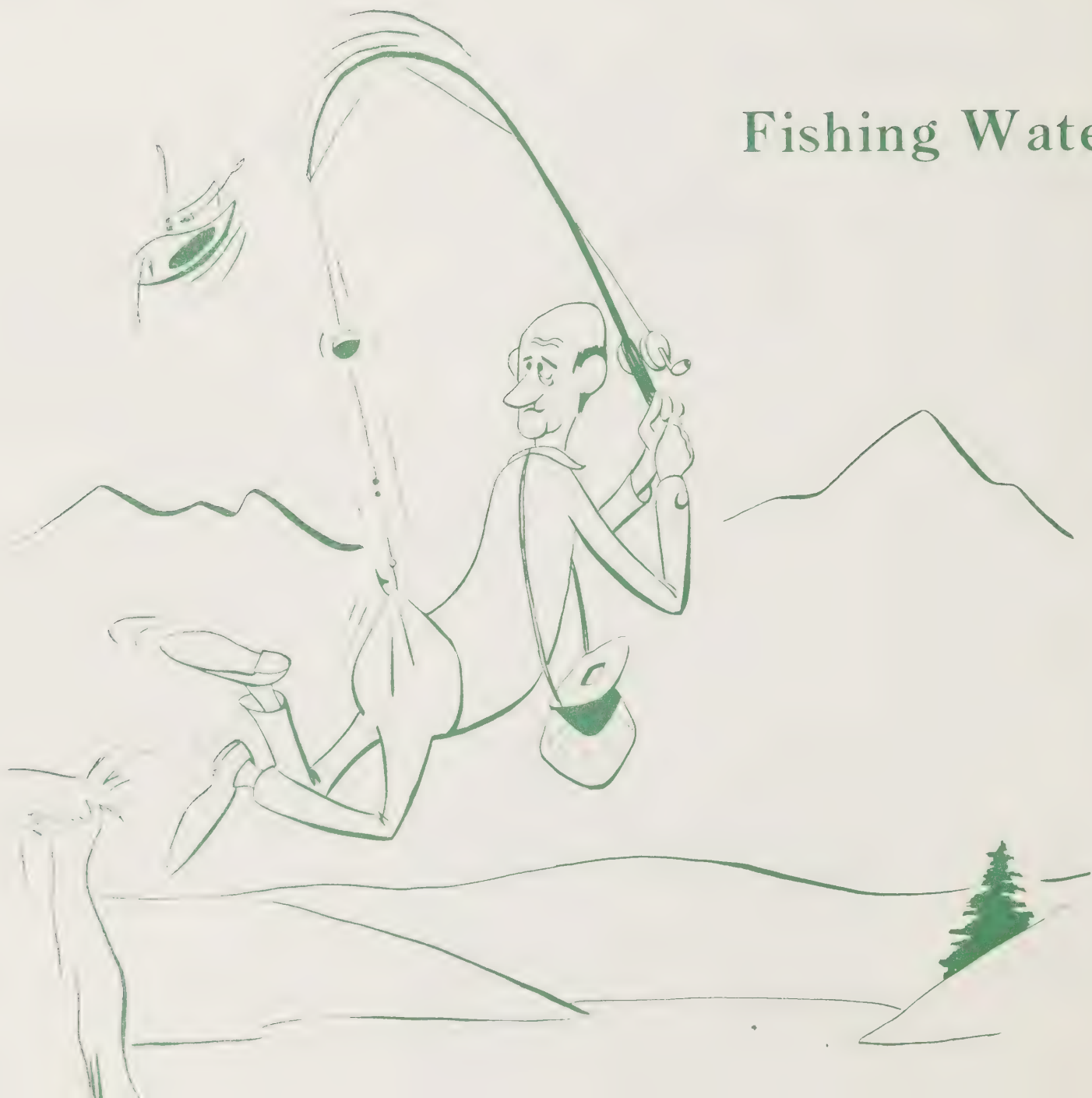
*Bicycling*



*Picnicking*



# Fishing Waters





Fishing as an activity in Colorado attracts a big following among residents and non-residents alike. What would-be Colorado vacationer does not close his eyes and envision himself knee-deep in a clear, swift mountain stream fighting a pugnacious trout?

Fishing as an outdoor recreation enterprise was placed into two categories: warm water fishing and cold water fishing.

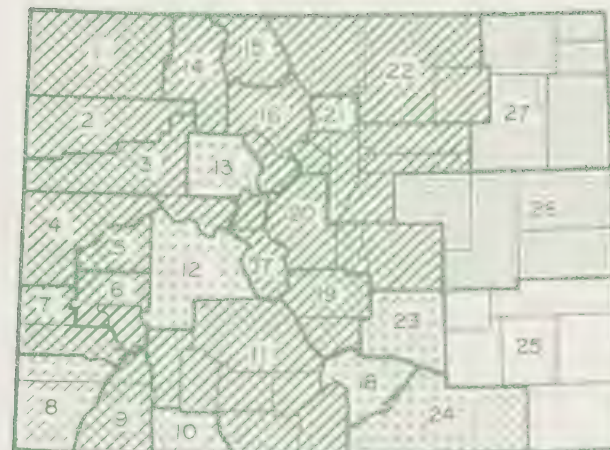
Both categories are obviously dependent upon existing or potential water supplies of the right kind.

Many of the appraisal groups did not rate warm water fishing because of a lack of suitable water areas or climatic factors.

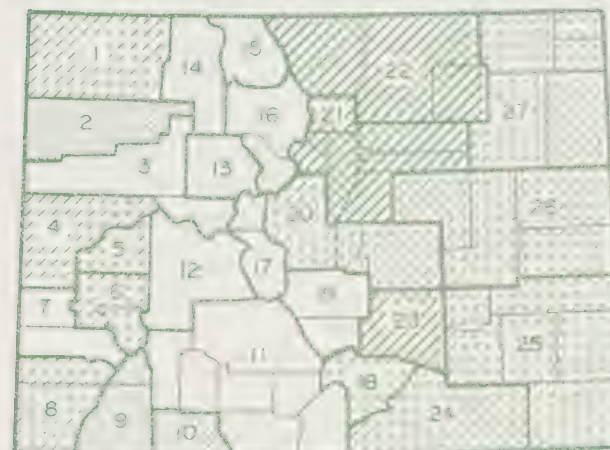
Cold water fishing, however, was rated in most areas, with 63 percent of the areas receiving high potential ratings. The tourist was influential in these high-rated areas because cold water fishing, especially for trout, is a powerful tourist draw. It is widely used in advertising recreation enterprises.

Much fishing in Colorado occurs in man-made reservoirs which are usually readily accessible. One principal detractant however, is the waters in these reservoirs are usually stored for irrigation and domestic uses. Drawdowns often leave barren, unsightly shorelines and make fish management difficult.

Cold Water

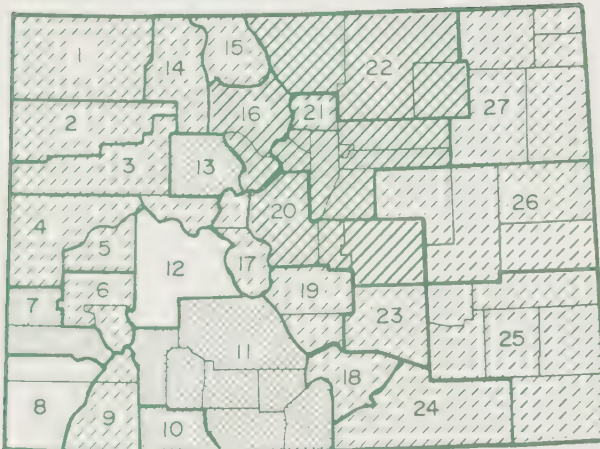


Warm Water



# Golf Courses

*Standard and Par 3*

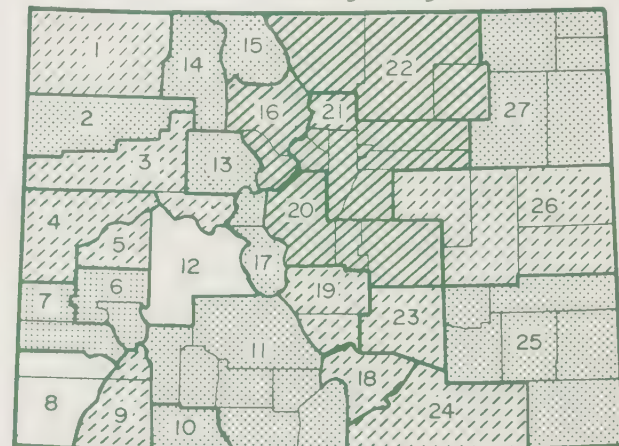


Golf courses and related activities were divided into two categories: standard and par-3 courses, and driving ranges and miniature golf. Standard and par-3 courses have substantial resource requirements, while driving ranges and miniature golf are minimal in their needs.

Standard and par-3 golf courses are expensive to develop and to maintain. Sufficient population, with adequate incomes, must be near to justify or allow development. Tourists, a large percentage of the summer population in some Colorado areas, may contribute heavily to the success of a golf course. Vacationers are also attracted to driving ranges and miniature golf.

Currently popular in new subdivisions is the building of a golf course for subdivision dwellers. The golf links are an increased sales attractant and also provide green open space which many subdivisions need.

*Miniature and Driving Ranges*

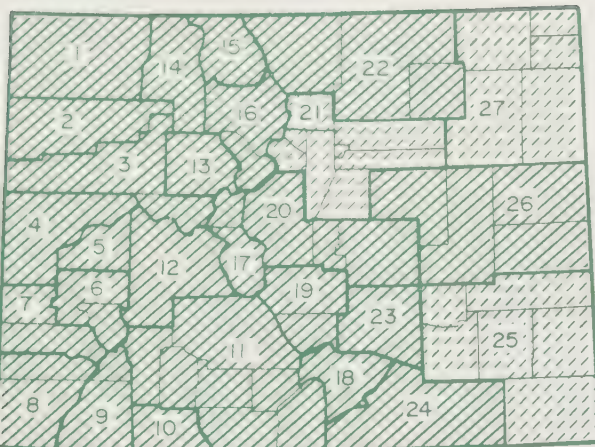






# Hunting

## Big Game



Hunting areas were divided for potential appraisal purposes into big game, small game, and waterfowl activities. Shooting preserves were considered a separate enterprise.

Big game hunting in Colorado attracts a large number of hunters, both resident and non-resident. Primary big game species are mule deer, elk, antelope, bighorn sheep, mountain goats and black bear.

Over 85 percent of the appraisal areas reported a high potential for big game hunting, with habitat quality maintenance and development important considerations.

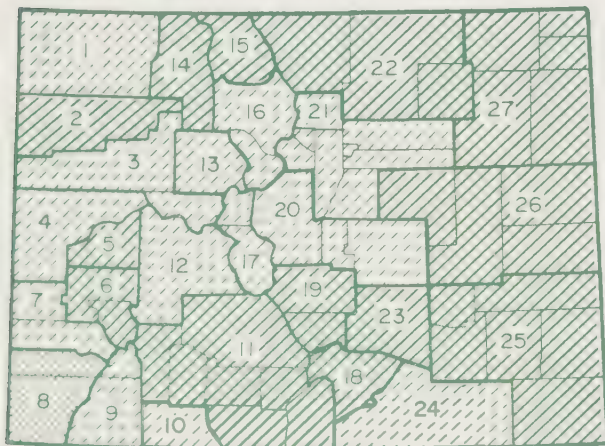
Small game hunting in the state affords variety. The diversity in habitat or ecological niches, due to altitudinal variations, permits

many different species. Pheasants, ptarmigan, several kinds of quail, cottontails, white-tailed jackrabbits, black-tailed jackrabbits, snowshoe hares, chukar, sage grouse, blue grouse, sharptailed grouse, spruce grouse, turkey, and mourning doves are all present to reward the hunter.

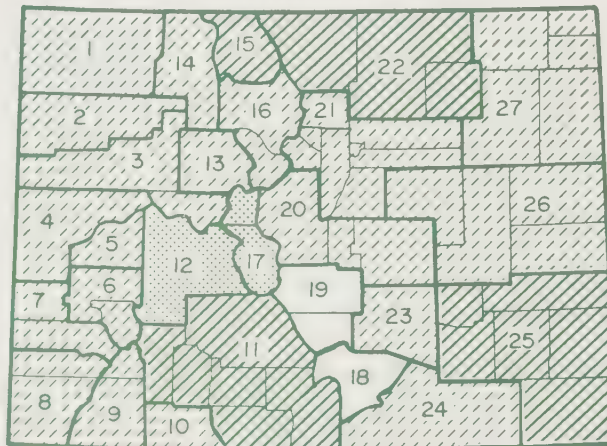
Waterfowl includes ducks and geese. In the high country, ponds and lakes are waterfowl production areas, but early freeze-up precludes much waterfowl hunting. At lower elevations, the key element considered was the availability of water areas on which to hunt. Goose hunting has increased remarkably in Colorado, due primarily to wildlife management agency programs to encourage local goose populations.

Economic opportunities based on hunting generally are available to the private sector. Lodging, guide services, and similar services are sold. In Colorado, trespass fees are also an income source for many landowners.

## Small Game



## Waterfowl

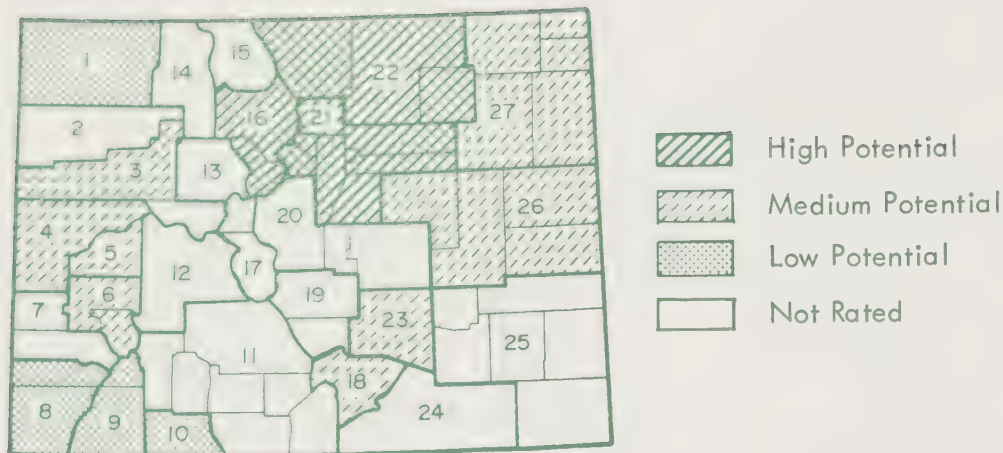


 High Potential  
 Medium Potential

 Low Potential  
 Not Rated







## Shooting Preserves

Shooting preserves offer the hunting of stocked game under conditions much like natural hunting. Under current Colorado law, the stocked game may be small game, waterfowl, and big game.

The typical shooting preserve in Colorado has pheasants, chukars, and sometimes waterfowl. Successful shooting preserves are close to population centers. Recently, however, there has been interest in developing big game shooting preserves far removed from urban areas.

Most appraisal groups, except those in urban areas, rated the potential as medium or low, or they did not rate it at all. Population and proximity are governing factors for shooting preserve potential: there are few areas in Colorado in close proximity to urban centers. Also, because state law permits hunting only from October to April, tourist populations are not an asset.







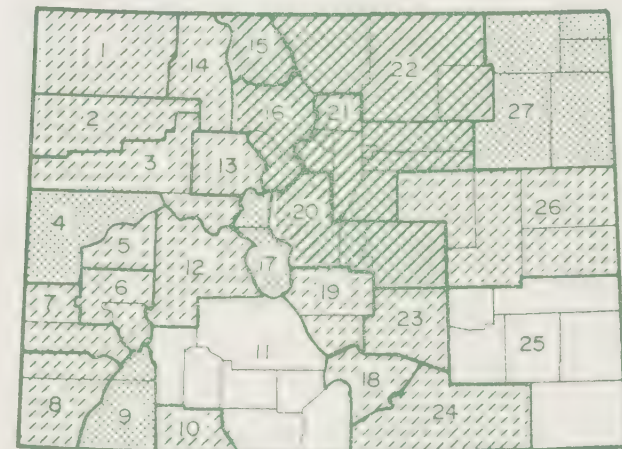
## Riding Stables

Riding stables, as viewed by the appraisal groups, were essentially those enterprises with horses for hire as a day-use activity. Not included were dude ranches and horse pack trips where horses are part of the operation.

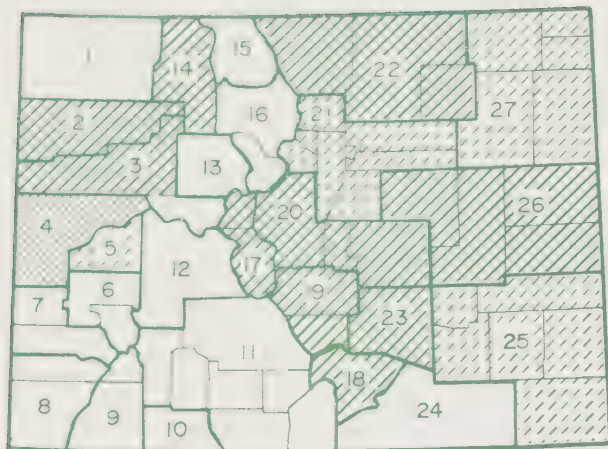
Typically, one associates the West with horses. However, most appraisal groups did not rate riding stables as a high potential enterprise. Most high ratings came from the urban areas.

Some of the reasons given for medium or low potential for riding stables are short tourist season, high cost of liability insurance, and the relatively high cost of maintaining horses.

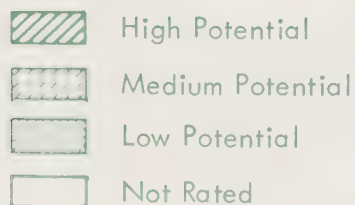
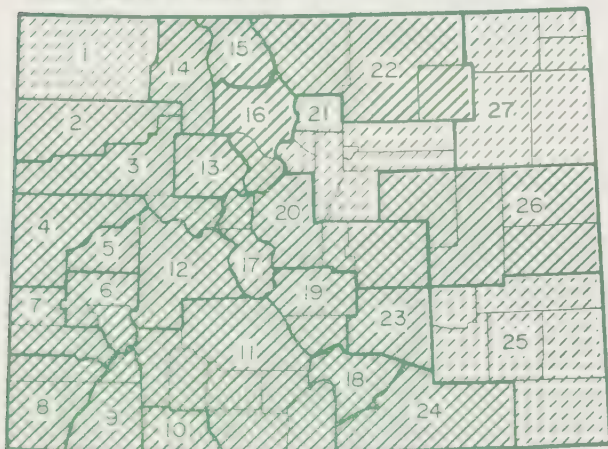
Many areas in Colorado do have potential for riding stables, especially those in urban areas and those with a large summer tourist population. This activity is, however, heavily dependent on close proximity to large populations, preferably with average or above average incomes.



Vacation Farms



Vacation Ranches



## Vacation Farms and Ranches

Vacation farms and ranches are alike in many ways. Both offer food, lodging, and recreation to urban customers. Both are resource-oriented. Both are rural in atmosphere and in their stress on country living.

As interpreted by appraisal groups in Colorado, the successful vacation farm offers wide diversity in crops grown and in the variety of farm animals guests can observe and work with. Many Colorado farms grow a single crop and do not offer a diversity of activities to attract customers. For this reason, vacation farms do not offer high potential in most of the appraisal areas.

Vacation ranches, commonly called guest or dude ranches, however, come into their own in Colorado. Emphasis is on livestock and riding to enjoy natural and scenic areas. Over 85 percent of the appraisal areas rated high for this type of enterprise.

Many Colorado ranches, with adjoining public land, a cattle herd, streams and ponds and surrounded with scenic areas are naturals for vacation ranch development. The typically cool, sunny summer weather offers a welcome change to urban dwellers patronizing Colorado dude ranches.

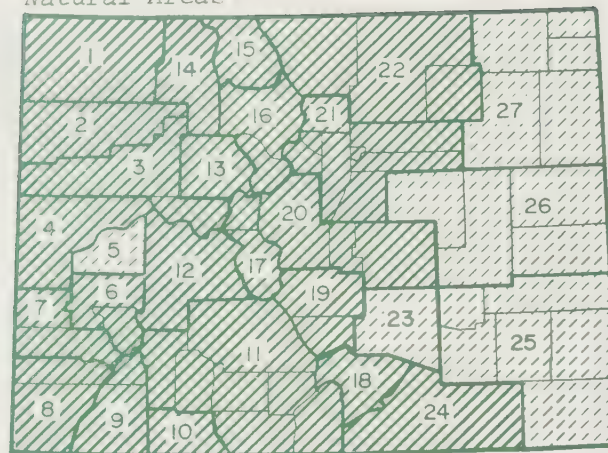




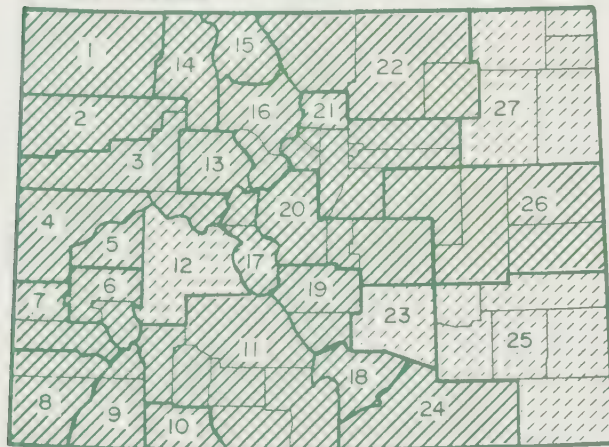
# Natural ...

## Scenic ...

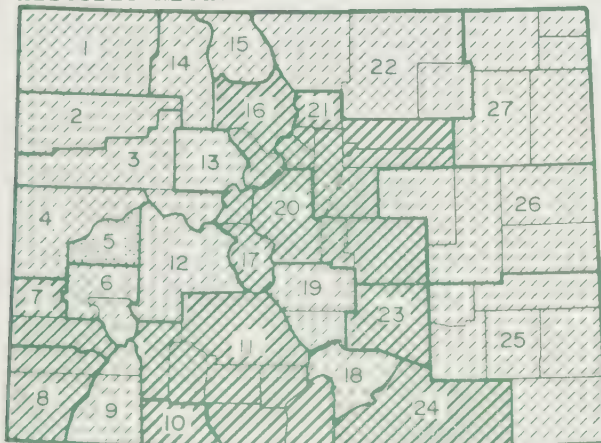
## Historic ...







Scenic Areas



Historic Areas



-  High Potential
-  Medium Potential
-  Low Potential
-  Not Rated

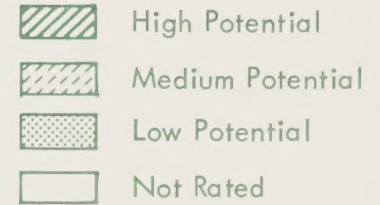
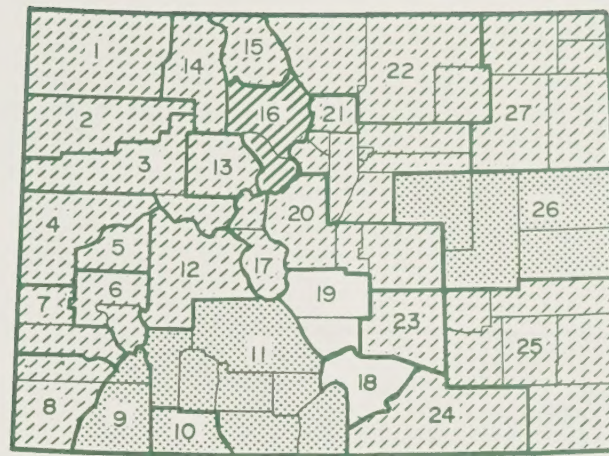


Colorado is endowed with natural and scenic areas which people like to visit. The state still offers wide open space in the mountains and on the plains with inspiring vistas. This is a heritage. Whether Coloradans can keep it depends on how well they plan and execute plans to protect their resources while using them.

The history of Colorado is replete with places and events that recall the romantic years of the gold camps, outlaws, trappers, Indians, and cowboys. While Colorado's recorded history is relatively recent, one can reflect on ancient civilizations that have passed at preserved and interpreted centers such as the Mesa Verde National Park.



# Water Sports



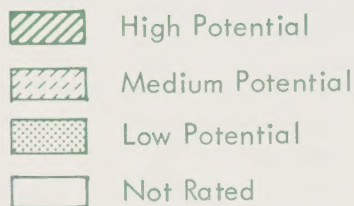
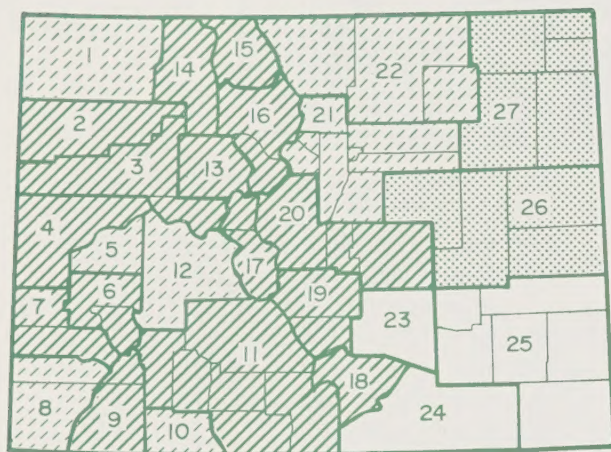
Water sports areas are those with recreational activities largely devoted to swimming, boating, water skiing and skin diving.

These activities are dependent on water and climate. In Colorado, climate a limiting factor for water contact sports, plays an important role.

Water areas are present in much of Colorado. However, most high mountain lakes are too cold for water sports. Most irrigation reservoirs undergo heavy drawdowns during the time of peak recreational use on water areas and so have limited value.

Only one appraisal group rated the potential for water areas high, with 88 percent of the appraisals indicating medium to low potential.

In the final analysis, while there is some potential for water sports area development, individual sites must be carefully chosen. The important factors must be evaluated before the private sector invests in developments.



## Winter Sports

Winter sports, in addition to skiing, includes snowmobiling, snowshoing, cross-country skiing, ice skating and other cold weather oriented activities.

Over 55 percent of the appraisal areas in Colorado indicated a high potential for winter sports development.

Obviously, not all appraisal areas have the resources necessary for a major ski development.

Winter sports areas are heavily dependent on climate and snow. For intensive development, such as a ski area, a complete evaluation must be made of site factors.





